



Maurice Hinchey

KEEPING SENIORS' ISSUES A TOP PRIORITY



Dear Friends,

The attacks against the United States that took place on September 11 and the acts of bioterrorism that have occurred since then have consumed a great deal of the attention of the American people and the Congress.

For my part, I have been working hard to ensure that my constituents are safe and secure when they are at home, when they are at work or school, and when they travel.

I have also been doing my best to see that those who have been injured — physically, psychologically, and financially— receive the help they deserve from the federal government.

*This does not mean, however, that the issues that were important before September 11 are no longer priorities. **I will continue to fight just as hard for senior citizens and veterans in the 26th Congressional District as I always have.***

Contact Me

Please feel free to contact me if you'd like more information about these issues, or if you need assistance with your Social Security, Medicare, veterans' or other benefits. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Making Prescription Drugs Affordable for Seniors

Too many senior citizens have no insurance for prescription drugs. In some cases, people have to choose between eating a decent meal and buying the medicine they need. I believe it is our responsibility to provide a guaranteed and comprehensive prescription drug benefit to all Medicare beneficiaries. While President Bush's enormous tax cut has made it much harder to accomplish this, I will continue working to ensure that every senior can afford his or her medications. In the meantime, I'm supporting other legislative measures that would reduce the cost of drugs for all seniors by 40 percent on average.

Securing Fair Social Security COLAs

The Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will be just 2.6 percent for 2002 and has been quite low for many years. COLAs are supposed to provide seniors with a fair annual increase in their benefits, but they are based on the increase in the cost of living for a typical American family. Seniors are often faced with much higher costs. For example, seniors spend a much larger portion of their income on health care than the average American and the cost of health care is rising at more than twice the rate of inflation. The Social Security COLA needs to

reflect the increased burden on the pocketbooks of older Americans.

I'm supporting legislation that would require the federal government to calculate the actual cost of living for seniors. If passed, this "seniors' COLA"

would result in a higher and much more realistic Social Security increase each year.



Congressman Hinchey talks with a constituent about seniors' issues

Protecting Funding for Local VA Hospitals

Many veterans have encountered long waiting periods and difficulty getting decent health care at local Veterans Administration hospitals. That's because funding for veterans' health care is being shifted from New York to other parts of the country. I've been fighting the VA's Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) plan, which unfairly penalizes veterans in the Northeast, cutting resources despite a continuing increase in demand for medical services by veterans in our part of the country. In each of the last four years I have offered an amendment to prevent the VA from using VERA.

During debate on my amendment, the new chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs promised that my concerns about VERA

would be addressed in a comprehensive bill he is working on to improve the VA health care system. I will be watching carefully to make sure this promise is kept.

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